
Title: Crawworth Expedition - Introduction

Author:

Lord CrawWorth stood
staring into the cave,
trying to get his eyes to
adjust to the pitch black.
He was afraid to light a
torch just yet, in case
some of the denizens of
the darkness were

attracted to the light or
heat. His hand strayed
from the hilt of his
sword to his thick
mustache, and he twirled
the end of it, as was his
custom when he grew
nervous. The silence was
broken by my voice.
"How far does it go, dost
thou think?" I asked. My
name is Caitlin, and I
insisted on coming with
the expedition. CrawWorth
claimed he did not care
one way or the other, as
long as I didn't get in
the way too much.
"It leads to another land,
M'lady. How far dost
thou think that is?" He
didn't mean to be rude,
but he was deep in
thought and paid no
attention to the inflection
of his voice. He turned
to make sure the rest
of our expedition was
ready.
Michelle, the ranger from
Skara Brae, was checking
her bow and trying to
peer around CrawWorth
into the cave. The green
cloak she wore wrapped
around her chain mail
muffled the noise it
would have made normally.

She finished with her bow and slung it over her shoulder, and then took the time to tie her long blonde hair into a ponytail.

Enas, the wizard, had come all the way from Moonglow to be part of the expedition. He kept his hair cut short and his face shaved clean.

CrawWorth was worried about the long blue robes he wore, but he appeared to be able to travel with no problems. Enas would be performing a dual function for our party, as he was also an accomplished artist. Lord British had tasked him with sketching each of the new creatures the expedition encountered.

Xarot, like CrawWorth, wore his best plate armor. The savvy fighter was also versed in the healing skills, and therefore made the perfect complement to CrawWorth. The two had fought back to back many times against orcs, ettins, and trolls, and

CrawWorth trusted him as though he were a brother. Xarot scratched his goatee and gave his axe a tedious examination.

He glanced at me and smiled, as though to reassure me, but I didn't need his reassurance.

The last of the group was the cartographer who would send maps back from the expedition to Lord British's waiting hands. His name was Dresler, and he wore leather armor that was just a little too big for him. He was easily the smallest of the group, and his curly hair and long beard made him look

the eldest, although he was probably only a few months older than CrawWorth, and probably years younger than Xarot. He didn't pay any attention to the conversation that I was having with CrawWorth, but instead took the time to check his blank parchment and his quill and ink.

"Hand me the torch."

CrawWorth finally said. He looked into my eyes, and paused. I like to think that it was occurring to him that I wasn't the little girl that he thought I was. My eyes have been known to have that effect on men before. He grew handsome somehow, there in the moonlight. Another time, another place, I thought. But that thought left my head quickly.

The torch flared with a brilliant yellow glow and the entrance to the cave lit up with a sickly radiance. I could see no end in sight. We entered carefully...

The search of the map maker.

I was with CrawWorth when he started searching for a competent mapmaker. Someone who would be able to take care of themselves, as well as make legible maps for the cartographers in Britain to study. We had interviewed scores of men and women before Dresler finally arrived. He walked in calmly and sat down at the long wooden table, covered end to end in half-drawn maps and half-realized ideas. He wore tattered clothes and carried a small club. He didn't have shoes or

armor, or even a real
weapon.

CrawWorth looked him
over dubiously, then
glanced at me
questioningly. I shrugged
my shoulders and waited
for someone to say
something. I didn't have
to wait long before the
newcomer spoke up for
himself.

"I'm Dresler. I'm thy man.
Aye." His voice was deep
and graveled, as though
he gargled with small
stones. His eyes never
left CrawWorth's, and I
think that the grizzled
fighter was a little
impressed by that. Maybe
more than a little.

"You draw maps?"

CrawWorth asked.

"The best. Let me show
thee."

I can only say that I was
astounded. In the space
of less than a minute
he'd done a rough outline
of not only the room we
were in, but also the
path he had taken from
the docks to arrive at
the building. His map was
littered with small
notations indicating a tree
here or a stone there.

Anyone who could see
could have followed his
map from here to his
starting location or from
there to here without so
much as looking up from
it.

CrawWorth wasn't done
though. The one thing to
him that was more
important than the ability
to draw a coherent map
was imbedded deep in his
mind.

"Canst thou defend
thyself, sir? Will we be
stopping every few
minutes to rest thy
weary feet?" He was
harsher than he should

have been. But Dresler
paid him no mind.

"That and a lot more. I
was once a soldier in
Serpent's Hold. But I
grew weary of the
soldier's life. So I went
to find my fortune."

"We'll see, good sir."

CrawWorth said, and he
rose from his chair with
a solid determination. He
picked up the two
practice swords that he
kept behind his chair and
tossed one of them to
the little mapmaker.

"No thanks, I've got me
own." He said, dropping
the sword and twirling his
club around in his hands.

CrawWorth swung sharply
from the left, meaning to
hit him with the flat of
the blade, not to hurt
him. But he needn't have
worried. With a deft
move the man ducked
under CrawWorth's attack
and slammed his club
down on CrawWorth's
outstretched wrist.

I heard a small pop and
then a clang as

CrawWorth's sword hit
the ground. He looked
down at his hand and at
the little man with the
stick, smiling at him.

"Sir, " CrawWorth said,
"thou art hired."

'Tis Dresler's maps thou
wilt be seeing here.

Believe me when I tell
thee that there is no
finer cartographer in all
the land. His maps are
accurate and elegant in
their simplicity. Never
take for granted the
many uses of a good
map.